UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1992/AB/L.10
22 April 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1992 session

FOR ACTION

OUTLINE PROPOSAL FOR A POSSIBLE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AT UNICEF HEADQUARTERS

SUMMARY

The Executive Board, in its decision 1991/31 (E/ICEF/1991/15), requested the UNICEF secretariat to prepare an outline proposal for a management review, to consider the need for undertaking such a review and, if it was so decided, to determine its scope. As requested, the Executive Director has taken into account other relevant reviews, including the studies and reports of the Budget Format Reference Group, as well as a multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF work.

The Executive Director has also consulted the Bureau, which believes that the results of the multi-donor evaluation and the work of the Reference Group will facilitate Board consideration of the need for and scope of such a study. The Executive Director concurs with that view.

The present paper outlines a proposal that includes a description of recent management reviews, a proposed framework, the scope of the proposed review, the organization and responsibilities, a work plan, and budget and costs should the Board wish the Executive Director to proceed with the review.

The Executive Director recommends that the Board defer a decision on this matter until its 1993 regular session in order to benefit from the above-mentioned activities presently being undertaken.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 1991 regular session, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to present for consideration at its 1992 session, an outline of a proposal setting out the possible scope of a review of the administrative and management structure at UNICEF headquarters in order to ensure that they remain appropriate and efficient (E/ICEF/1991/15, decision 1991/31). The Board requested that the outline proposal be developed in consultation with members of the Executive Board through the Bureau, and take into account the relevance of other reviews that had already been conducted.

2. As of this writing, the other relevant reviews and evaluations are still under way. Some initial feedback from a multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF in the form of a Phase I report has become available and has been taken into account; the final results, however, will not be available until November 1992. The work and deadlines for the preparation of the outline have had, therefore, to proceed without the full benefit from these ongoing events.

II. RECENT MANAGEMENT REVIEWS

3. In considering the need for and the scope of a possible review of the administrative and management structure of UNICEF, the Executive Board should take into account the following major reviews that have been undertaken in recent years:

(a) A review by an internal task force established by the then new Executive Director in 1980-1981 whose recommendations led to a major restructuring of Programme Division and other organizational units in 1982;

(b) A review of programming and budgetary matters undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in 1979 (E/ICEF/L.1403) and its follow-up discussions at the Board, which resulted in the restructuring of the UNICEF budgetary system and, inter alia, in the adoption of a biennial cycle starting in 1983;

(c) More recently, in 1986, a JIU review of UNICEF activities and structures (JIU/REP/86/11), which was studied by the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1987/CRP.6) and discussed by the Board at its 1987 session (E/ICEF/1987/11). A number of its recommendations were incorporated in the ongoing reorganization process;

(d) A review by an internal task force on information resources management whose recommendations in 1985-1986 led to several important structural changes, among them the establishment of the Planning Office, the Evaluation Office, the Office of Information Resources Management and improvements in programme management information systems;

(e) A thorough and systematic review of the budget, staffing and structure of the organization, at headquarters and in the field, which has been carried out on a biennial basis since 1983 by the Budget Planning and Review Committee. This review has led to several major reorganizations, notably the consolidation of the supply and procurement function at Copenhagen in 1983-1985, the significant strengthening of UNICEF field offices in Africa beginning in 1984, and subsequently in Latin America starting in 1985. Important steps to streamline and strengthen various regional offices and headquarters divisions have also been taken as necessary;

(f) An evaluation of external relations functions carried out in 1989 (E/ICEF/1990/L.4) which led to significant changes in the management of external relations and clarification of some of its functions.

4. Through the above studies, evaluations and reviews, administrative and management structures of UNICEF have been and continue to be adjusted and reinforced in keeping with the policy decisions and directives given to the secretariat by the Executive Board. The Executive Director believes that, with the periodic fine-tuning that is built into the Budget Planning and Review Committee process with the oversight of the Executive Board, UNICEF procedures and mechanisms enable the current organizational structure of UNICEF to adapt to the tasks that the organization is expected to carry out in the years ahead. As such, the Executive Director does not see a pressing need for a major study of the administrative and management structure of UNICEF at this time.

III. CONSULTATIONS WITH THE BUREAU

5. The Executive Director has consulted the Bureau, as requested by decision 1991/31. The Bureau believed that the results of the major evaluation mentioned in paragraph 2 above would need to be available before a fully informed judgement could be reached. A second important factor, in the Bureau's view, was the work of the Reference Group appointed to review the structure and format of budget documents as requested by decision 1991/30. The various reports of the Group will be reviewed at the 1992 regular session, with the results helping to shape the frame of the 1994-1995 biennial budget to be presented to the 1993 regular session.

6. Therefore, the Bureau was of the opinion that it might be prudent to defer a decision on this matter until these elements were available for a thorough review by the Executive Board. Concurring with this view, the Executive Director recommends that a decision on whether to proceed with a review, and if so, on its possible scope, should be taken by the Executive Board at its 1993 regular session.

IV. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

7. However, if the Executive Board wishes the Executive Director to pursue a management review at this time, it is suggested that the focus of such a review should be to explore how UNICEF can be more effective and efficient in assisting developing countries to implement the very ambitious programme goals and strategies for children in the 1990s which the Board reviewed and approved in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

8. Additionally, the study could focus on the strengthening and monitoring of management by objectives and accountability in the administration of resources entrusted to UNICEF. Finally, the study might also examine the need to strengthen parts of headquarters and field structures in order to ensure that they remain appropriate and efficient into and beyond the year 2000.

9. An important focus for a management review is to ensure that its findings and recommendations are relevant and practical. This is the only approach that will enable UNICEF to benefit fully from such an exercise and to devise appropriate mechanisms for the application of its outcome.

10. The following outline of a possible review has been prepared in the event the Board would wish to pursue this forward-looking perspective.

A. Scope of the proposed review

11. The study would build upon the recent management review exercises, some of which are mentioned above. The considerable analysis undertaken by the Reference Group established by the Board would form an important basis from which to proceed. Similarly, the outcome of the multi-donor evaluation would also contribute to this process. In the light of these events and, in particular, the guidance the Board is expected to provide on the reports prepared by the Reference Group, the review might:

(a) Identify and analyse for the next 10- to 15-year period, projections and the focus of the UNICEF mandate, and the nature and emphasis of its tasks and priorities. This analysis should take into account the directions for the 1990s decade and Summit goals and programme priorities to the next level of specificity, i.e., to a point where they can be translated into financial, budgetary, personnel and management terms;

(b) Analyse briefly current UNICEF headquarters structure in the context of the organization's past and evolving mandate. In this connection, it might review the progressive developments in the role and responsibilities of headquarters in relation to the Board, UNICEF field and regional offices, the United Nations system and other collaborators. The broad historical analysis might cover the past 10- to 15-year period;

(c) Describe in specific details the evolution of UNICEF work in such areas as advocacy at the highest decision-making levels as a programming

approach; social and community mobilization; increased professional staff involvement in policy formulation and field operations; more staff-intensive and direct project-level involvement; increasing use of cash (non-supply) assistance in programme development; training; project implementation; and monitoring.

12. The above information and data thus obtained would facilitate an analysis and identification of specific issues and recommendations to resolve them, e.g. policy development, support, service and supervisory functions of headquarters divisions; the role of the regional office vis-à-vis headquarters and field offices; relations with common system development agencies, and the working relationship between the secretariat and the Board in view of the changing environment and new challenges facing children and women.

B. Organization and responsibilities

13. The Executive Director would coordinate and carry out the management review. Once the scope and terms of reference have been approved by the Board, a coordinator would be designated by the Executive Director to head a core working group of six to seven selected UNICEF staff, with appropriate field representation, to work full-time on the study. The services of outside management consultants, as necessary, would be acquired to work together with the UNICEF team.

14. Appropriate consultations with Executive Board members, through the Bureau, would be held.

C. Work plan

UNICEF team

15. The core group appointed by the Executive Director would, as its first task, prepare specific details of a plan of action. Members would be assigned clear responsibilities within the overall framework of the study. They would also be assigned liaison functions with and receive assistance/information from specific headquarters divisions and regional/field offices. The group would also work closely with the consultants. Mini-groups to work on specific topics might be created and abolished as necessary.

16. The Executive Director and his deputies would act as the policy team, receiving periodic reports on progress, resolving issues as they arose, and provide overall policy guidance and direction. They would also be the link with the Bureau/Board members.

Consultants

17. The selection of appropriate consultants is very important for undertaking an effective review and its outcome. They should possess a strong international background, as well as a full understanding of and experience in

social development issues. Equally strong credentials in management sciences and recent experience in undertaking management surveys of organizations comparable to UNICEF are also essential.

18. The consultants would be expected to support the work of the UNICEF team and to assist the Executive Director in realizing the objectives of the study as directed by the Board. They would be able to contribute an independent perspective and suggest state-of-the-art methodologies and approaches to achieve the highest levels of objectivity and efficiency in handling the available information and data. They might also identify the need for additional data and suggest improvements in the design of the study.

Timetable

19. The Executive Director requests the Board to give careful consideration to the timing of the review. During 1992, with the Board providing advice on the Reference Group documents, the preparation of the 1994-1995 biennium budget will preoccupy the secretariat. Moreover, the management-related aspects of the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF work that can provide valuable inputs to the review will not become available until November 1992. Therefore, as suggested above, the study might be carried out during 1993 for review by the 1994 Executive Board during a non-budget year.

20. The comprehensive study being proposed requires a deliberate analysis and careful attention to detail so that its conclusions and recommendations are appropriate and suitable for practical application. The proposed time-frame will ensure that the findings of the review, after Board endorsement, can be considered and applied in the preparation of the biennial budget to be considered by the 1995 Board. A tentative timetable is suggested as follows:

May 1993:

Executive Board considers the need to undertake the study and approves its final scope and content.

May 1993 - September 1993:

(a) The Executive Director carefully reviews the guidance received from the 1993 Executive Board, including that on the Reference Group reports, the multi-donor evaluation recommendations and other relevant developments;

(b) The Executive Director appoints a coordinator and a full-time core team. The team undertakes the formulation of study approaches, prepares the methodology and logistics, and undertakes consultations both within and outside UNICEF, as necessary;

(c) The team identifies consultant needs, finalizes their terms of reference and identifies potential consultants;

(d) With the assistance of the selected consultants, finalizes the detailed time-frame, including possible consultations with Board members, with selected UNICEF offices and others as relevant;

(e) With the participation of the consultants, review the scope and content of the study, identify the methodology and work plan, organize relevant information and data as available; and identify any gaps and arrange to fill them.

September-November 1993:

(a) Begin actual work on the study, including data analysis, work with consultants; and consultations with UNICEF staff and Board members and others, as necessary;

(b) Initial conclusions to be ready by 15 November 1993 for review by the Executive Director and his deputies. Any guidance and advice for the preparation of the final study will be provided to the UNICEF team;

(c) The core team to finalize the draft of study and its conclusions, with assistance from consultants;

(d) Consultations with the Bureau.

December 1993:

Finalization of the study.

January/February 1994:

Consultations with the Bureau.

March 1994:

Prepare the study in its final form for presentation to the Executive Board.

May 1994:

Executive Board considers the study and its recommendations.

D. Budget and costs

21. A study of this magnitude will require additional expenditures to cover consultants' fees and travel, UNICEF team travel, some specialized short-term staff and other miscellaneous costs. In the absence of a specific plan, it is not possible to prepare an accurate budget. However, based on recent experiences of UNICEF and others, a study of this nature would incur upwards of $500,000 in additional costs. Experience has shown that such a study also demands considerable staff time, particularly that of the senior management at headquarters and in the field.

22. The financial needs for this study will be more accurately calculated after the Board decision. Details of its financial implications will then be included in the 1992-1993 revised budget and 1994-1995 proposed budget.